

Minister's Musings

Voluntary Assisted Dying

A Bill will be introduced into the NSW State Parliament this week that will give terminally ill people the option to end their lives at a time and place of their choosing. It is expected that both of the major political parties will allow their members a conscience vote.

How do we, as followers of Christ, think about this issue?
How do we speak with our friends and neighbours about it?

Many churches will be very vocal about it (opposing it).
And many churches also hold the reality that we run aged care and palliative care facilities where these conversations are part of the experience of residents and their families.

The Synod of the Uniting Church in NSW&ACT, in its recent online meeting, received a discussion paper which may be useful in assisting your engagement with this issue ([here](#)).

The Uniting Church has no "official" position on this issue, recognising that there is a diversity of views within the church.

In the States where legislation has already been enacted (Victoria, Western Australia and more recently, Queensland), each Synod (State Council) has considered whether to allow people living in facilities operated under the auspices of the Church to access the legislated process. Our colleagues in Victoria have agreed to allow this: <https://victas.uca.org.au/moderators-pastoral-letter-on-voluntary-assisted-dying-response/>
Our colleagues in Western Australia have produced this resource to continue the conversation: <https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/uniting-church-centre/endoflife/>

This is a difficult conversation for many people to engage with as it is often linked to difficult and deep emotional responses. And many in our community are not equipped with frameworks (religious or otherwise) to assist them to unpack and consider the issues it raises. I hope that these resources will enable your own thinking around this issue and, importantly, indicate that there is not a singularly accepted religious view on the issue.

Let me know if you would like to talk more about this issue. If there is enough interest, I am happy to facilitate some small group discussions.

Rev Kath Merrifield
13 October 2021